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ABSTRACT

In this 2-year study, the assumptions and methods of role theory were employed to guide the description and analysis of instructional leadership among secondary school principals. This paper reports selected findings from the first year's work--a focused ethnographic study of instructional leadership patterns in five secondary schools--based on interviews, observations, and informal conversations with administrators and teachers. After a background discussion of five basic ideas that guided the work and of the contributions and limitations of past research, the study addresses the role of the principal in fostering norms of collegiality and experimentation. The observation and evaluation of teaching, provisions for curriculum development, involvement in shared planning or preparation of methods and materials, and the design and conduct of inservice education are all examined for the conditions and consequences of the leadership they convey. Data on classroom observation and feedback practices between teachers and administrators serve to illustrate the range of leadership strategies and to make a case for the probable connections between those strategies and school improvement outcomes. An extensive bibliography is included. (TE)

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IS THERE INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP IN HIGH SCHOOLS? FIRST FINDINGS FROM A STUDY OF SECONDARY SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL NORMS

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IS THERE INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP IN HIGH SCHOOLS?

Background

The power of the school principal to shape the perspectives and practices of teaching has more often been claimed than it has been systematically described or closely analyzed. In this two-year study, the assumptions and methods of role theory were employed to guide the description and analysis of "instructional leadership" among secondary school principals. The study's aims are to advance understanding of the principal's influence on teaching and learning in secondary schools and to contribute to a practical program of training and support for school administrators.

The study was arranged in two stages. A first stage of one year made a focused ethnographic study (Erickson, 1977; Fienberg, 1977) of instructional leadership patterns in five secondary schools. In this stage, researchers conducted interviews, observations and informal conversations with administrators and teachers in four high schools and one junior high school.

A second stage, now in progress, involves six high schools and two junior high schools. The main work of the second stage is to convert the qualitative information of the first stage into survey measures of norms of initiative and collegiality and to apply them to all teachers, department chairs, and administrators in each school. With this much broader base of respondents, the aims are to determine the schools' norms of interaction about instruction; to characterize the potential for instructional leadership that resides in the positions of administrator, department chair, and teacher; and to identify concrete and recurrent instructional leadership principles and practices that might be employed in many schools. Throughout, the study has been guided by the accumulated theory and research on schools as organizations, with particular focus on norms, roles and status (Gross, Mason and McEachern, 1958; Jackson, 1966; Bird and Little, 1983).

This paper reports selected findings from the first year's work, and traces the development of our thinking from our early focus on administrative influence to our eventual focus on the structure of leadership and the organization of schools for purposes of steady improvement.

Five basic ideas guided the work in its first year:

First, schools that prove successful, even under difficult circumstances, appear to be characterized by certain workplace habits and perspectives. In these schools, teachers (and others) work closely together as colleagues (a norm of collegiality) and teaching practices are held open to scrutiny, discussion and refinement (a norm of continuous improvement). The advantages of collegial work, as teachers describe them, seem clear: an expanded

pool of ideas and materials, enhanced capacity for handling complex problems, and opportunity for intellectual stimulation and emotional solidarity are among them. Thus, some schools more than others are organized to permit the sort of "reflection-in-action" that Sykes (1983) argues has been largely absent from professional preparation and professional work in schools. Such norms* appear to be both powerful and rare (Little, 1981; Feiman-Nemser and Floden, 1984; Lortie, 1975; Cohen, 1981).

Second, instructional leadership is bound up with administrators' (and others') ability to build and sustain these norms. Principals, by virtue of their position, have rights of initiative that others do not. By their performance, they contribute to--or erode--the relevant norms. By what they say and do, reward and defend, administrators convey a set of values, create (or limit) certain opportunities and control certain consequences.

Third, the requirements and demands of leadership in secondary schools are confounded (and compounded) by size, curriculum complexity, and the scale of administrative obligations. Anticipating that a broader structure of leadership would be required, we began by concentrating not only on principals but also on assistant principals and department chairs.

Fourth, without abandoning the view that leadership requires some irreducible element of character--a willingness to act with courage and will in difficult situations--we argue that the central patterns of instructional leadership can in fact be described at the level of principle and practice, that they can be learned and taught and deliberately organized, and that they can be made part of a program of the selection, training and support of building administrators.

Fifth, previous research has led us to believe that some interactions more than others have potential for developing schools with the collective capacity for improvement (Little, 1981). While leaving open the opportunity to be surprised, we

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*The use of the term "norm" here highlights the social and collective nature of these expectations. Without denying that there are differences among individuals (i.e., that some persons are more curious, self-confident, independent than others), teachers' accounts reveal shared expectations to be powerful organizational forces. They are not simply matters for individual preference; they are, instead, based in shared knowledge of the behavior--the talk and the action--that is appropriately part of being a teacher and being a teacher in this school (Feiman-Nemser and Floden, 1984). Such shared knowledge is accumulated in the course of daily interaction on the job. It is displayed in small and large ways, day after day, as teachers go about their work. It is the basis on which persons interact with others and on which they interpret what they see and hear (Kjolseth, 1972).

nonetheless concentrated on certain key practices, particularly those that brought persons closest to the crucial problems of teaching and learning. These included practices of classroom observation, collaborative curriculum development, shared planning and preparation of lessons and materials, regular and frequent talk about teaching (Little, 1982).

Contributions and Limitations of Past Research

In myriad and powerful ways, researchers argue, the principal shapes the school as a workplace. Out of case study and other research over the past ten to fifteen years has emerged increasingly persuasive confirmation that the principal's role is both central and complex (Sarason,1971; Bossert et al., 1981; Persell, 1982; Greenfield, 1982; Metz, 1978; and others). These core concepts of influence and complexity form the major resource in past work and a fruitful point of departure for the study reported here.

While the major contribution of past research has been to illustrate the "centrality" and complexity of the principal's role, the accumulated body of work might be strengthened in the following ways:

First, our understanding would be enhanced by greater specificity in the description of actual role performance. Summarizing their findings on the role of the principal in curriculum reform, Fullan and Pomfret (1977, p. 384) acknowledge that "most of the...studies used global measures of leadership, and so we do not know the specific nature of this role." The studies reported by Fullan and Pomfret are not atypical in this respect, though there have been recent gains (Dwyer et al., 1983; Morris et al., 1981).

Second, our knowledge and practice would be strengthened by systematic attempts to distinguish the role repertoires of elementary school principals from those of secondary school principals. Little (1981), for example, found that elementary school principals were able to foster shared work among teachers, by conducting weekly inservices and by making regular, frequent observations. In secondary schools in the same district, sheer size, curriculum complexity and diversity of interests made a comparable set of role performances problematic.* Principals in

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*Berman and Pauly (1975), reporting the results of the Rand Corporation's study of school change, note that elementary school principals were more often viewed as "effective" and "supportive" by the teachers they supervised than were secondary principals. An examination of the items used to judge "support," however, reveals that the measure may be weighted in favor of elementary school principals, e.g., by emphasizing the principal's direct contributions of classroom ideas and materials.

secondary schools fostered shared work by shuffling schedules to permit teachers to develop and test an idea in teams. The prevailing view that secondary principals are less directly involved with matters of curriculum and instruction has led us to ask by what mechanisms they do work to organize schools for influence on instruction, curriculum and classroom organization.

Third, existing research and future inquiry would be strengthened by a clear explication of underlying theoretical assumptions and by a theoretically or empirically developed rationale for concentrating on selected aspects of the administrator's role. Beyond a broad assumption (derived from organizational theory) that certain rights of initiative accrue to positions of authority, rarely does one encounter a theoretical perspective and analytic method that permit one to detect underlying conceptual principles of leadership in the tangle of moment-by-moment interactions in the school day. More systematic use of explicit theoretical perspectives would add coherence to a program of research and would increase the chances that apparently contradictory findings might be reconciled (or the sources of their contradictions understood). (See Rowan et al., 1982; Bossert et al., 1981.)

Prior investigation of teachers' work relationships and practices of "learning on the job" (Little, 1981) initiated a line of work that, expanded to the more thorough exploration of principals' role performance, contributes to existing knowledge and to practical application in precisely the manner just suggested. Norms of collegiality and experimentation, as contributors to school success, serve here as a focus and create the possibility for theoretical coherence, situational specificity, and practical application.

The Role of the Principal in Fostering Norms of Collegiality and Experimentation

By a combination of position and performance, principals and other building administrators can initiate or inhibit, build or erode, expand or contain norms that bear critically upon school success (Dwyer et al., 1983; Little, 1981; Keedy, 1982). The central question then is, By what specific interactions, in what situations, does an administrator affect those norms?

We are less interested here in the distinctions between broadly effective and ineffective actions than in exposing how generally effective tactics can be marshalled specifically in support of norms of collegiality and experimentation. These two powerful norms are forged in the course of daily work; they arise not primarily out of classroom experience but in critical ways out of teachers' interactions with each other and with administrators. They appear to be maintained (or not) by the specific nature of administrators' announced expectations, their routine allocation of administrative resources and rewards, their daily encounters with teachers in meetings, classrooms, and hallways.

Five Schools

The first year's study was conducted in five secondary schools (four high schools and a junior high school) in two districts. In negotiations with district personnel, we sought schools in which administrative teams had a reputation for exerting influence upon instructional quality, declared themselves interested in exploring the limits of their administrative roles, and were amenable to devoting their time, knowledge and energy to the proposed study. The schools themselves were to reflect the range of ordinary circumstances that principals might encounter (see Table 1).

Small city district. This district serves a population of approximately 35,000 in a primarily rural area approximately forty miles north of a major metropolitan center. The local economy is based largely in agriculture, but the area has for many years also been home to several high technology industries. Four of the state's major universities are located within fifty miles. The area is socioeconomically diverse with a relatively small, mostly Hispanic, minority population. The district consists of seventeen elementary schools, four junior high schools and three high schools.

While administrators here are selected by the superintendent and approved by the board, principals have considerable latitude to recruit their own assistant principals, thus creating the opportunity (perhaps even the obligation) to shape an administrative team with shared views and complementary skills. Most of the district's seventeen secondary administrators meet monthly in an informal evening "study group" session. In this district, where secondary schools hold a reputation as innovators, one high school and one junior high school participated in the first year study.

Daniels Junior High School. Located in the town's original (and aging) high school, this junior high school serves a diverse population of almost 900 students, of whom 38 percent receive free or reduced-price lunch. During the twelve-year tenure of the principal and under his leadership, the faculty has established a reputation for a high standard of professional competence, initiative and innovation. Their collective efforts to improve their understanding and practice of teaching have been reflected in consistent gains in achievement test scores, particularly in English and math, and a marked reduction in disciplinary problems.

This site permits us to examine a repertoire of instructional leadership practices that have been established and expanded over time and articulated in detail by both administrators and teachers. Further, it permits us to investigate how relationships develop among teachers, between teachers and administrators and among administrators as norms of collegiality and improvement take hold in a building.

Table 1

SUMMARY OF SITE CHARACTERISTICS

School Characteristics					Administrator Characteristics			
District/ School	Total enrollmt.	Percent minority	Achieve- ment	Faculty size	Staffing pattern	Sex	Race/ ethnic	Tenure in building
BIG CITY								
Andrews High School	1248	48%	High	76	Principal	F	White	3
					AP Instr.	M	White	7
					AP Disc.	M	Black	3
					AP Pupil	M	Indian	1
Bolton High School	1636	78%	Low	106	Principal	M	Hispanic	4
					AP Instr.	M	White	2
					AP Disc.	M	White	4
					AP Pupil	F	Hispanic	7
Carlson High School	1675	41%	High	89	Principal	M	White	3
					AP Instr.	M	White	18
					AP Disc.	M	Black	4
					AP Pupil	F	White	3
SMALL CITY								
Emerson High School	929	9%	High	50	Principal	M	White	3
					Asst. Princ.	M	White	8
					Asst. Princ.	M	White	3
Daniels Junior High	882	11%	High	49	Principal	M	White	12
					Asst. Princ.	F	White	1

Emerson High School. This high school draws one-third of its approximately 900 students from Daniels Junior High School. In the past three years, the principal and assistant principals have displayed interest in acting as instructional leaders by working directly with one another and with teachers to improve classroom practices. Because this sort of venture in leadership is more recent here than at Daniels, but is necessarily influenced by its example, this site provides an opportunity to examine first stages in the development of the skills, opportunities and consequences of instructional leadership. Further, it offers an opportunity to compare strategies in a junior high school and high schools with comparable populations of students and a single set of district priorities, expectations and resources.

Big city district. This urban district serves an ethnically diverse population of roughly 500,000 with eighty-one elementary schools, eighteen middle schools and ten high schools. One combination middle-high school has opened within the last three years; nine schools have been closed as enrollment has declined and population has shifted to the city's periphery. The district has operated under a variety of court-ordered desegregation plans for the past fourteen years, and a broad range of policy and program decisions remain subject to court approval.

The teachers' organization is strong in this district; the contract agreement closely governs practices of teacher selection, transfer, scheduling and class assignments, and includes provisions for teacher evaluation and staff development.

Administrators in the district are nominated by the central administration, with selections subject to board approval. Principals have little influence over the selection and placement of assistant principals, and the membership of some building level teams has changed frequently.

Three of the district's high schools are participants in the first year's study. Each enrolls between one thousand and two thousand students, and has from seventy to one hundred teachers. Each has a substantial minority student population (over 40 percent) and an experienced, stable teaching staff.

Bolton High School. This high school is ethnically mixed but socioeconomically homogeneous, drawing most of its students from lower income areas of the city. In his four years here, the principal has encouraged higher expectations for student achievement and attendance, organized staff time and responsibilities to permit greater concentration on curriculum and instruction, and moved toward more focused classroom observation and teacher evaluation. This school presents an opportunity to explore the limits and possibilities of instructional leadership under difficult circumstances: low test scores, low expectations for students' performance or future prospects; an established faculty for whom career incentives hold little appeal, and whose prerogatives are protected by a strong union agreement.

Carlson High School. Housed in a relatively new building, this once all-white school drew an affluent, middle-class population of students prior to court-ordered desegregation. Teaching assignments here were (and still are) considered "plums." In recent years, minority enrollment and socioeconomic diversity have increased. The school is now about 41 percent minority, of whom a substantial number are bused in from one of the city's lowest income areas.

Teachers and students alike refer to this school as "college prep" oriented, citing as their nearest competition some nearby suburban high schools. The school has had two "high powered" women principals in recent years and is now led by a man experienced in the principalship at all levels, nearing retirement, and by his own and others' accounts, markedly different in his approach. He protests that he is not the instructional leader in the building, leaving open the question of how influences on instruction come to be organized in a school where instruction has continued to produce impressive results. In contrast to Bolton High School, where the administrators' challenge has been to promote professional improvement in the face of low student performance, the challenge here may be to sustain professional commitment and foster adaptability as the student population becomes increasingly heterogeneous.

Andrews High School. Once a vocationally-oriented high school with an all-Black enrollment, this school has emerged with a reputation for being academically strong and for preserving a high degree of harmony among its now diverse student population. The principal is one of the district's few women secondary administrators. In part, this school was nominated on the basis of others' impression that the principal is skilled in garnering support from faculty and community.

Interviews, observations and documentary evidence from these five schools generated over 4,600 pages of transcribed interviews, Q-sort tables, and field notes in the first stage of work. Analysis of this material suggests that the critical collegial practices identified by Little in 1981--talk about teaching, observation of teaching, shared preparation of materials, and training together and training each other--are recurrent in the first year's data.

In her previous study, Little also identified four general categories of initiative in regard to instruction and collegial interaction: describing and calling for a practice, modeling or enacting that practice, rewarding the practice, and defending it against internal and external pressures. These also appear to be sound and useful categories in light of the first year's data. A fifth category of initiative--the strategic use of the school's material and human resources--also claims attention. In part, the deployment of school resources (materials, schedules, special arrangements, time, facilities) constitutes a system of rewards and will be treated that way. But such allocations also

constitute support, an additional category for analysis of acts of leadership and initiative.

Qualitative data have been mined by preparing a card* for every statement, observation, or reply which falls into the focus of the study and which describes what happens--and what sense is made of what happens--in each school. Like the transcripts and notes, these cards are organized in the categories of (1) observation of and feedback on teaching, (2) training together and training each other, (3) shared preparation of materials, and (4) talk about teaching. Each card is coded according to the category of initiative--(1) describing and calling for a practice, (2) enacting or modeling a practice, (3) sanctioning or supporting a practice, and (4) defending a practice. Finally, all cards are sorted by school and cross-referenced to the original transcripts or field notes. Throughout, readers rely on analytic principles of recurrence, reasonable contrast, and apparent function to reveal practices which are not adequately classified by those categories (Little, 1981; Pittenger, Hockett and Danehy, 1961).

Thus is created a reduced data set which can be organized in any of several ways--by critical practice, by type of initiative, by school, by position (principal, assistant principal, department chair, and teacher), and by other categories which may appear as the data are examined.

Images of Leadership

In the literature, leadership strategies range from the bureaucratic to the scientifically rational to the charismatic (Bossert et al., 1981). In particular, instructional leadership may invoke a picture of heroic, charismatic or symbolic acts which, though rare, tend to personify a goal or establish a vision in some dramatic way. Such acts are undeniably a part of leadership. At the same time, there is the growing recognition that substantial accomplishments in school improvement require initiative, tenacity and support of a more pedestrian sort. It is simply implausible that charisma alone could improve a school. It seems likely instead that the outcomes to which charisma points are achieved by daily, persistent, exertions in the desired directions, and that these daily exertions are both more describable and more reproducible than the dramatic moments and grand gestures. They thus merit close attetion. Bossert et al. (1981) report:

> Principals in effective schools, as well as other administrators, apparently devote more time to the

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*These "cards" take two forms. They are actual index cards, each recording a single coded episode; and they are computer records that lend themselves to the analysis of profiles among and across schools, groups, situations and practices.

> coordination and control of instruction and are more skillful at the tasks involved. They do more observations of teachers' work, discuss more work problems with teachers, are more supportive of teachers' efforts to improve, especially by distributing materials and promoting inservice activities, and are more active in setting up teacher and program evaluation procedures than principals in less effective schools (p. 21).

As a group, the seventeen administrators in these five schools are equally intelligent, caring, and committed. Most have shown the courage to act with vision and deliberation in tough situations. They are not, however, equally oriented toward instruction in their day-to-day work, nor are their schools equally organized to exert deliberate influence on curriculum and instruction. Four characteristic patterns or images of leadership emerge, each reflecting assumptions about teaching, teachers, schools and, therefore, the proper role of leaders.

Some administrators base their leadership strategies in assumptions about teachers, seeing leadership as a matter of "letting good teachers teach." In this mode, the aim is to have a smoothly running school that provides an orderly environment for learning. Some administrators take initiative to remove distractions from or disruptions to teaching. This is a pattern consistent with the description of "buffering" provided by Bossert et al. (1981). It is the characteristic pattern of two of the four high schools.

Other administrators talk less about teachers than about teaching. Their apparent assumption is that teaching practices vary and can be improved, and that it is a part of leadership to require and support improvement. Two main tactics are evident. By the first, which we have labeled "going to bat," administrators take a strong stand on a set of ideas or methods, taking it upon themselves to announce expectations for their schools and their staff. Some of them proceed even when they are quite alone in stating and acting on the expectations. That is, administrators' chosen initiatives may fly directly in the face of well-established and powerful norms regarding both instruction and the scrutiny of instruction. By a second tactic, which we have labeled "infiltration," administrators find or create arenas of interest and support in which they can move to forge agreements on teaching practices or curriculum. The intent of such a tactic is to avoid direct confrontation with immovables while testing the limits and possibilities of an idea.

By either tactic, administrators directly involve themselves in training, seminars with teaching, and classroom observation. At its best, a strategy of direct involvement engages principals and teachers in frequent, shared work on central problems of curriculum and instruction; it helps to insure that management and policy decisions will be informed by or driven by shared agreements about instructional priorities. Judging by teachers' comments, it is a

pattern that is eminently satisfying (even while sometimes taxing) when carried off well. At its worst, this approach outstrips the capacity of an administrator to act knowledgeably and skillfully in interactions with teachers, spreads administrators too thin with too little to show for it, saps energy and erodes mutual respect. In any case, such a strategy poses tremendous problems of organization and scale. This pattern has been successfully applied in the study's single junior high school, attempted with uneven success in one high school, and tried with little success at yet another high school.

Finally, some administrators concentrate on cultivating relations among the staff that would increase their collective capacity to help one another to improve. Least actively, the administrator strives only to encourage "communication." Most actively, the administrator sets out to introduce new routines (e.g., the use of common planning periods for shared planning, or peer observation) or to modify roles and responsibilities (e.g., by delegating supervision responsibilities to department heads.) By organizing groups and promoting teachers as leaders, administrators succeed in "making the school larger than one person" (Lipsitz, 1983). They search for common ground, existing agreements and potential partners. At its best, this strategy expands the intellectual and other resources devoted to school improvement while offering new professional opportunities and rewards to teachers. By distributing instructional leadership more widely, however, it also requires a fundamental alteration in the status relations among teachers and between teachers and principals. Strains, tensions and conflicts arise for which administrators may have only narrow interpretations ("personality conflict") and equally narrow solutions (see Cohen, 1981). Teachers in one school take pride in the accomplishments wrought by two subject-area teams, but are also forthright in describing the tensions between the "haves" who work closely with the principal and the "have-nots" who are not seen (or treated) as innovators, "do-ers", "movers and shakers."

The major strategic problem posed by a team-building strategy is the creation of an expanded structure of leadership and the legitimation of mechanisms by which teachers can emerge as leaders with respect to teaching.

Critical Practices and Principles of Leadership

An examination of selected critical practices reveals how and whether a school is organized to exert influence on instruction, and what part the principal and other administrators play. The observation and evaluation of teaching, provisions for curriculum development, involvement in shared planning or preparation of methods and materials, and the design and conduct of inservice education all can be examined for the conditions and consequences of leadership they convey. Of these, classroom observation (whether or not it is done for purposes of evaluation) brings administrators and teachers closest to confronting crucial problems of teaching and learning. Data on classroom observation and feedback practices in

five schools serve to illustrate the range of leadership strategies, and to make a case for the probable connections between those strategies and school improvement outcomes.

An Illustrative Case: "Getting Into Classrooms"

Observing and being observed, giving and getting feedback about one's work in the classroom, may be among the most powerful tools of improvement. Whether by their own direct involvement or by organizing, leading and monitoring a system of observations done by others, administrators control a potent vehicle for making schools intellectually lively places, educative for teachers as well as for students (Shulman, 1983).

The direct observation of classroom practice is argued to be one of the critical practices by which influence on instruction and curriculum is made possible in a school. The main question here is this: Are observation and feedback described, organized, practiced, prepared for, and tied to consequences in a way that makes them a credible route to effective teaching?

In one of five schools, classroom observation is so frequent, so intellectually lively and intense, so thoroughly integrated into the daily work and so associated with accomplishments for all who participate, that it is difficult to see how the practices could fail to improve teaching. In still another school, the observation practices approach this standard. In three of the five schools, however, the observation of classroom life is so cursory, so infrequent, so shapeless and tentative that if it were found to affect instruction favorably we would be hard-pressed to construct a plausible explanation.

The Value of Observation and Feedback

In classic apple pie fashion, almost everyone believes in the virtues of classroom observation. Getting into classrooms ranks high, at least in principle, among the priorities of all administrators. The actual place of observation and feedback in a set of institutional priorities is less uniform, less assured. Here the issues revolve around: (1) Where observation and feedback fit in an order of priorities that may include other pressing demands on the time and energy of administrators; and (2) the demonstrated connection between observation/feedback practices and certain other values, obligations and rewards. Schools were distinguished not so much by the endorsement they gave to "getting in the classroom" as by the place they accorded it in their day-to-day work.

An order of priorities. In two of the five schools, almost nothing takes second place to observation and feedback; in the remaining three schools, observation and feedback take second place to many other tasks and obligations. In some schools, almost nothing could pull an administrator out of an observation;

in other schools, almost anything can pull an administrator out of an observation.

Establishing priority for observation and feedback turns out to be difficult. Well-intentioned efforts may be compromised by competing obligations. In one high school, for example, an assistant principal delayed all his assigned classroom observations until the second semester in order to devote his time to establishing a system of identification cards for students. In another school where observation had been well-established, the school board's decision to abandon the student smoking area sent administrators scurrying after "illegal" smokers and wreaked havoc on the carefully constructed observation schedule.

Precisely because administrators juggle varied (and sometimes competing) obligations, they risk giving mixed messages about the importance and significance of classroom observation. In one instance, the public value of observation and feedback has been confirmed by asking teachers to evaluate administrators on how well they have managed those practices. In another instance, however, the stated importance of observation and feedback has been undermined by the fact that the public praise or reprimands that teachers receive follow not from their classroom accomplishments but from attendance reports or sign-in sheets.

Consequences. Over time, the importance that administrators attributed to classroom observation is either confirmed or questioned on the basis of known consequences--whether observation "makes a difference" in the quality of professional work or in the nature of personnel decisions. Teachers and administrators alike argue that observation and feedback ought to serve a range of professional ends, ranging from substantive improvements to career rewards. Viewed as instruments of professional development, observation and feedback ought to expand teachers' repertoire of practices, and enhance their ability to discover, articulate and apply pedagogical principles. When tied to teacher evaluation, they ought to confirm a set of professional values as well as satisfying bureaucratic requirements.

At issue, according to teachers and administrators, is the nature of professional standards that are invoked and achieved, the nature and distribution of rewards or other sanctions, and the ability of administrators to influence either.

Psychological and social rewards. In a profession which relies largely upon intrinsic rewards, and in which the "endemic uncertainties" of the classroom make accomplishments hard to confirm (Lortie, 1975), a major consequence of classroom observation is, in the words of one administrator, "the boost or blow to pride." At Daniels Junior High, where practices of observation and feedback are well-established, teachers describe them as "informative, helpful, analytical and instructive." At Emerson High School, observations have been termed "thorough and professional." A new teacher at yet another high school says, "He wrote me a note that was really positive--I even saved it!"

The common pattern in the two "small city" schools was to find observation both demanding and rewarding. The common pattern in the remaining three schools was to report that "observation makes little difference," followed by a disclaimer: "it's nice to get a pat on the back." On the one hand, everyone welcomes the short appreciative note or the quick "pat on the back"; on the other, administrators were quick to point out that these may be the only meaningful consequences they control, while teachers prefer more substantive commentary on what they know to be complex performances. In the absence of more substantial organizational rewards, a "pat on the back" may seem inadequate compensation for major contributions. In the absence of more powerful professional or bureaucratic sanctions for poor performance, assaults on self-esteem may turn relations hostile without measurably improving the work.

Professional rewards. At stake here are rewards including expanded opportunity, a more collegial relationship with administrators or peers, and recognition for important contributions. In the two schools where professional rewards closely follow skillful performance and involvement in professional development, teachers credit administrators with taking them seriously as professionals but struggle with the problem of differential distribution of rewards (a "star system"). Even in these schools, it is not clear that exemplary performance in the classroom earns a teacher special status with peers with respect to the ideas and practices of teaching.

Technical improvements. The issue here is the ability of observation and feedback to contribute to an expanded repertoire of skills, and greater capacity for judging relation of theory to practice. In two of the five schools, teachers credit observation practices with building greater overall conceptual sophistication, technical competence, and collective capacity to improve; in three, teachers only rarely attribute new ideas or refined skills to the observation process.

Bureaucratic consequences. This involves the case-by-case match between performance and consequences, and the associated allocation of opportunities and rewards. Administrators' ability to demonstrate a consistent and defensible tie between teachers' professional knowledge, skill, and commitment and their professional fortunes is a topic in all five schools. It is the least powerful of the consequences in shaping teachers' views.

Versions of observation and feedback. The form that observation and feedback take in individual schools reflects administrators' stance toward teaching and teachers; further, it conveys a view of the "proper" role of administrators in supporting the work of teachers. A central issue here is whether observation and feedback, as presently organized in a given school, have a plausible connection to teacher quality, the overall level of pedagogical skill, and the level of professional investment and commitment.

The versions of observation range from "dropping in and out" to systematic, structured observations organized as part of a sequence of direct assistance to teachers. Dropping in and out of classes is said, by those who do so, to establish administrators' presence and to offer a comprehensive view of instruction in the building. Administrators speak of maintaining general visibility, while generally trusting in an experienced faculty to do a competent job. In schools in which systematic observation prevails, administrators have no less faith in teachers' abilities or motives, but speak of focusing on those principles and practices with which even an experienced faculty may be unfamiliar and which may prove difficult and complex in practice.

The Organization of Observation and Feedback

At issue here is the degree to which observation and feedback are conducted on a scale large enough to make them meaningful, integral parts of the work of teaching.

Participation. Across all five schools, both administrators and teachers support the view that at least some teachers should be observed by administrators every semester; a considerable number believe that all teachers should be observed every semester. With few exceptions, they were far more reluctant to endorse observations by department chairs or teachers. In practice, this combination of beliefs may place a real strain on administrators to deliver. In two high schools, the principal does virtually all observations. In one of those schools, the principal limits observations to the twenty or so faculty members whose turn it is to be evaluated under the district agreement; in the other, the principal completes the required evaluations and attempts to make several ten-minute visits to all other faculty members as well. In two other schools, administrators divide responsibilities in order to observe each of approximately fifty teachers on a four-to-ten day cycle at least once a year; in these same two, plans are underway for introducing peer observation.

Frequency. The impact of observation rests heavily on how often it happens and how long it continues. In some schools, observation is a routine part of teachers' interactions with administrators. At Emerson, administrators observe for twenty-two four-day "weeks" in a thirty-six week year. On most days, at least one of the three administrators is in at least one classroom for a structured observation. Altogether, they complete close to 300 structured observations with a faculty of approximately fifty.

At Daniels Junior High, administrators each observe two or three classes a day, most days of the year. At that rate, they complete between five and six hundred observations each year with a faculty of about fifty.

At Bolton High School, the principal says that he aims for ten observations a day. He was observed on several days to spend at least ten minutes in each of five classrooms.

The risk of too little observation is that it can't possibly add up to a mechanism for the improvement of teaching, though other purposes ("visibility," or conveying general interest in "what's going on") can be served. In some schools, teachers' beliefs about the worth of classroom observation are more likely to develop from rumor than from direct experience. When structured observation occurs once every five years (as it does for most teachers in two of the high schools, and for many in a third), it is unlikely that observers and observed will have the requisite mutual understanding or the shared language for describing and analyzing what is seen.

An alternative dilemma arises from the attempt to squeeze many (e.g., ten) observations into a single day. One might ask whether ten observations can in fact be "focused" in a manner that will be seen by teachers as useful. To increase the number of observations in the interest of "getting into classrooms" may seriously limit the prospects that feedback will demonstrate the kind of concreteness, focus, reciprocity and deference needed to make teachers willing and thoughtful participants.

Duration. Decisions about how long to stay in a classroom are cast in terms of purpose ("keeping in touch with what's happening" versus "knowing enough to be helpful") and in terms of appropriate professional relations. This dimension is one of two that clearly differentiate among schools (see Table 2), and has given rise to a distinction between "what's right and what's rude" as a way of characterizing observation patterns.

In some schools, special circumstances are required to produce an observation longer than twenty minutes of a single classroom period. To observe for an entire period, or to come in two days in a row, calls for explanation to the teacher. In other schools, it takes special circumstances to limit an observation to as little as twenty minutes of a single class period. Failure to return for a second (or third or fourth) day would be considered rude, and would call for an explanation to the teacher.

To produce observation on the scale witnessed in two schools has been a triumph of planning, organization and persistence. The boundaries between "leadership" and "management" have become hard to delineate. Small decisions have been driven by larger visions; the larger visions, in turn, have been the cumulative effect of smaller tactics in the areas of scheduling, staff responsibilities, and budget.

Rigor and Relevance in Observation

Teachers' faith in observation and feedback rests in part on the adequacy of the criteria and procedures. Are the criteria conceptually sound and practically appropriate? Are the procedures adequate to produce fair judgments and meaningful commentary?

Table 2

ADMINISTRATORS' AND DEPARTMENT CHAIRS'
VIEWS OF LEADERSHIP PRIORITIES: CLASSROOM OBSERVATION

Practice	District	Administrators who place this as high priority (N=17)	Chairs who say this is treated as high priority (N=24)	Chairs who agree this should be a high priority (N=24)
Drop in and out of classes	Big City	67%	25%	25%
	Small City	0%	13%	13%
Observe some teachers every semester	Big City	50%	50%	56%
	Small City	80%	63%	75%
Provide detailed feedback to teachers following observation	Big City	67%	31%	56%
	Small City	80%	63%	88%
Make notes or other records during a class	Big City	42%	19%	25%
	Small City	80%	100%	100%
Observe the same class two or more days in a row	Big City	17%	6%	25%
	Small City	100%	88%	100%

Acknowledging other relevant purposes (e.g.,personnel management), we concentrate here on the prospects that the in-class observation procedure will add to teachers' knowledge, skill, confidence and professional standing.

Criteria. The five schools do not differ appreciably in the specific criteria they employ (Figure 1). They do, however, differ in their treatment of those criteria--in the amount of effort they devote to figuring out what each criterion "looks like" in practice, in their efforts to get clarity and consistency among observers in a single school, and in the degree to which the terms used form a coherent vocabulary that administrators and teachers use to describe the work of the classroom. Thus, in the two "small city" schools, administrators and teachers take pride in having built a "shared language" over a period of time, while admitting that they still sometimes struggle to understand one another. In the "large city" district, administrators and teachers find the stated criteria generally sensible, but make no few systematic efforts to use and refine the language of the criteria in post-observation discussions.

Procedure. Across the five schools there is considerable variation in the methods used and in the kinds of evidence and interactions those methods generate. Here, too, the distinctions between "what's right and what's rude" differentiate among schools. In two schools, it would be rude to enter a classroom without a pad or observation form; in one, it would come as a surprise to teachers if an administrator carried paper and pencil into the room. Those who take detailed notes argue that they are creating the "data" without which a thorough discussion is not possible, and that they are fulfilling a professional obligation to work as hard at observing as the teacher is working at teaching. Those who take no notes during a class argue that to do so would limit their ability to "see everything," and would make teachers uncomfortable. One principal relies on notes constructed later in his office, insisting "you might not believe that I can remember everything, but I can." The issue here may not be whether researchers find such a claim credible, but whether teachers do.

Two consistent and related dilemmas emerge. First, the effort to make teachers "comfortable" may compromise the drive for competence. One teacher comments that "comfort and improvement aren't always compatible." Second, teachers in schools with frequent observation place heavy emphasis on the development of shared understandings and shared language. The notes taken in a class, they say, help to build precisely such understandings and such language. They help to create "thick skin," and a tolerance on both parts for classroom performances (and observation conferences) that are sometimes rough, unpolished, and clumsy. The principal of one school began observations on the very first day of school, concentrating his efforts on two teachers he expected would have difficulty getting the year off to a smooth start; in both cases, the teachers credited his assistance on classroom management with

Figure 1

CLASSROOM OBSERVATION CRITERIA
IN TWO DISTRICTS

Small City District

1. The objective of each lesson is formulated and clearly written or stated.
2. The purpose and relevance of learning the material to be presented is made evident to the students.
3. The learning set, or motivation, for the lesson to stimulate interest or establish a positive mood is established and maintained.
4. Learning activities are congruent with objective/objectives.
5. Modeling of the lesson or skill in a planned presentation is made.
6. Informal checks for understanding were made during the instruction.
7. Guided practice, when appropriate, is provided and closely supervised.
8. Evaluation is made of results of instruction
9. Remediation is planned for students not meeting objectives.
10. Enrichment is planned for students showing mastery of objectives.

Big City District

1. Appropriate planning and preparation
2. Teaching to planned objectives
3. Interpersonal relations with: pupils, staff and parents
4. Use of effective classroom management techniques
5. Use of appropriate and varied instructional materials
6. Motivation of pupils
7. Use of evaluative techniques to test teaching results

helping them establish an orderly environment in the first two weeks of school. Hardly gluttons for punishment, teachers in such schools deliberately seek observation when they believe they have something to learn from an observer:

> "I wish there were more observations. This semester I'm trying out a new unit on heroes with a lot of team learning. I so wanted him here when I tried it out. He tried but he couldn't make it. But if he does give you time you know it's going to be quality time."

By contrast, teachers in other schools arrange to be observed only when they have a fair chance at a smooth performance; principals agree to delay observations until a teacher has a class "settled down."

Establishing Professional Relations

By each interaction, teachers and administrators confirm or erode the set of professional norms and relations on which steady improvement rests. Each stage of observation and feedback constitutes an opportunity to establish, confirm, modify or jeopardize the necessary social relations. Some professional relations more than others support the close scrutiny of classroom practice, permitting work on teaching practices without damaging teachers. These relations are expressed by teachers as matters of "trust," "respect," the absence of "threat" and the presence of high standards. Our task has been to unravel such terms, to make them less mysterious, less bound to traits of character and more interpretable as situated acts that might be learned and practiced.

Deference. Unlike close friends and families, teachers and administrators cannot generally rely on long histories to insure that they intend no harm to one another; to establish trust in one another, they must find a substitute for the intimacy of close family ties.

Practices of deference preserve personal and professional integrity while exposing ideas and practices to close study and evaluation. We have observed ways of talking and acting which tend to reassure persons that they are not being attacked even as their practices are subjected to rigorous scrutiny. We term these ways "deferential" because they address the person's work role; they address expectations for behavior, actual behavior and consequences, and give due respect to qualifications, experience, skills and the complexity of the job. They leave the role incumbent intact; they leave his or her person, worth and motives out of the matter.

It has seemed to us that these deferential ways of speaking and acting have made it possible for teachers to join in more rigorous examination of teaching practice, and thus are tools of instructional leadership. They will be familiar to students of communication, interpersonal relations and group interaction:

concentrating on ideas and practices rather than people, on description rather than judgment, on precision over generality are examples. For us, the learning of these tools as personal skills is only a start in instructional leadership. The crucial question is whether they are made powerful norms--shared expectations for behavior--in schools.

Reciprocity. The solidarity of a group seems to depend on some sense that its members--administrators, department heads, and teachers--are equally invested, equally at risk, equally rewarded and equally energetic. To the extent that observation and feedback have taken hold as powerful practices in these schools, it is largely by virtue of fostering mutuality and reciprocity in interactions. By taking the time to learn how to observe, by working hard during classes to observe thoroughly, by inviting feedback from teachers on ways to improve their observations, administrators in two schools have shown themselves to be as invested in the examination of teaching as they ask teachers to be. In addition, reciprocity has been established by insuring that both teachers and administrators can exert influence over most or all aspects of the observation process, ranging from the selection of the observer, to the range of criteria and curiosities addressed in the observation, to the topics and procedures employed in giving feedback.

Obligation. In interviews and observations, we have encountered at least three forms of "trust", all of which appear relevant to instructional leadership. The first is **trust in others' intentions**, specifically in their intentions not to do one harm. This version of trust is, of course, fallible. The extraordinary tentativeness with which observation and feedback were discussed in three of the five schools is testimony to the frailty and uncertainty of good intentions as a guarantor of success.

A second form of trust is based in **predictable criteria and procedures**. Teachers in two schools stressed their faith in a clear (though not exhaustive) set of criteria and a procedure that took the mystery and one-sided subjectivity out of observation. A teacher in another school proposed that thorough notes taken during an observation might provide a basis for sorting out disagreements, making him more confident in the observation process.

Finally, trust appears to rest on administrators' willingness to balance their authority to observe or evaluate with an obligation to do so knowledgeably, skillfully, and fairly; in parallel fashion, staff developers or other specialists have built trust by fulfilling an **obligation to inform** (Little, 1981). Teachers at Daniels Junior High can recount with considerable clarity (and with no embarrassment) the critiques of their teaching made in recent observation conferences; in that school, the demands implicit in the critiques will be matched by support from administrators and other teachers. In a school where teachers have less faith in observation--but where at least some would prefer to see it practiced on a much larger and improved scale--the assistant principal for instruction confesses that he feels woefully

inadequate to satisfy such an obligation:

> "If these [observations] were meaningful, I'd feel very insecure [and] would demand to be armed with some good techniques. [But] since they're not, I don't place a lot of importance on them."

The requirements of reciprocity and deference are emerging as critical factors in the value attached to observation and feedback. *The necessary social relations are fragile commodities,* strengthened or weakened in the day-by-day interaction among administrators and teachers. A teacher and principal have worked together closely for several years, and with impressive accomplishments to show for their efforts, yet in a conference the principal apologizes to the teacher because he unintentionally hurt her feelings by making a criticism without offering an analysis of the cause or alternatives for a solution. Criticism without analysis leads to hurt feelings and places teachers in jeopardy; praise without analysis leads both to relief (a good reputation is built, or a good evaluation insured) and to contempt (the observer has nothing to offer). By imposing the obligation of teacher evaluation along with many other responsibilities, or by failing to assist administrators to learn the necessary skills and methods, a district can place many administrators in situations which are at least awkward and at worst destructive of administrator-teacher interactions about teaching.

Once in place, however, these professional relations are also remarkably resilient, supportive of the kind of "thick skin" required to permit detailed, close analysis of teaching practices and their consequences.

Emerging Dilemmas

Several dilemmas begin to emerge. Among them are these:

Scale of the task. To do observation and feedback in a meaningful fashion may stretch a small administrative team very thin, even assuming they are in agreement about the worth of the practices and feel an obligation to use them. As a matter of sheer numbers, an administrative staff numbering two, three or four faces a major challenge in organizing observations for faculties ranging from fifty to over one hundred teachers. In Figure 2, we have illustrated the problem using a hypothetical staff configuration of eighty teachers and three administrators.

The more complex the curriculum and the more sophisticated the instructional practice, the greater are the technical demands on the observer and the harder it is to do a credible job of observation. In "getting into classrooms" for purposes of improvement, administrators encounter certain objective realities. Studies of school improvement and school effectiveness suggest that the tasks of improvement are well beyond the capacity of administrators to lead alone, just as they are beyond the capacity

Figure 2

A SMALL ILLUSTRATION OF POSSIBILITIES FOR EXPANDING OBSERVATION AND FEEDBACK

Teachers claim that they do not begin to have faith in an observer's grasp of their teaching in less than four visits. What are the possibilities for producing observation on that scale?

Taking a faculty of 80 teachers....

How long will it take to observe everyone once if observations are done at the rate of:

Observers	One a week	Three a week	Five a week
Principal alone	Two years	27 weeks	16 weeks
Principal and one assistant principal	40 weeks	13 weeks	8 weeks
Principal and two assistant principals	27 weeks	9 weeks	5 weeks
Principal, AP and four department chairs	Variable rates for administrators and chairs, e.g., three a week for administrators and one a week for chairs would require 8 weeks		

of teachers to resolve working independently (Bird, 1984; Berman and McLaughlin, 1978). When school improvement is seen primarily as an increase in a school's collective capacity to pursue systematic improvements over long periods of time, demands on leadership are multiplied. These demands probably exceed the capacities of even skillful administrators, but could be more nearly met if the present school leadership were augmented by teacher leaders proficient not only in teaching but also in support of other teachers.

A structure of leadership. In the words of one recent observer of school leadership, a principal's main contribution may be "to make the school larger than one person" (Lipsitz, 1983). One aspect of "policy," then, appears to be a form of organization in which leadership is broadly distributed and by which collegial work among teachers is given direction, continuity and depth. In secondary schools, one pattern has been to invest team leaders or department chairs with special authority for organizing and leading team work, or specifically for doing classroom observations, teacher supervision and (in rare instances) teacher evaluation.

Nonetheless, the options for expanding the group of observers are governed in part by prevailing perceptions of teachers' and chairs' appropriate roles. Differential roles among teachers run counter to historical patterns; there appear to be few mechanisms in schools by which teachers can come to defer to one another on matters of teaching, or by which exemplary teachers can emerge as leaders with rights of initiative on curriculum and instruction. Asked about the possibilities for introducing peer observation, or systematic observation as a part of the department chair's role, the chairs are almost uniformly conservative in their replies; the closer a proposed practice comes to calling for critique or evaluation of another's teaching, the more it incurs the disapproval of teachers. Closer to the classroom is also closer to the bone, closer to the day-by-day performances on which personal esteem and professional standing rest.

Problems of emerging leadership. Effectiveness is argued by some to be a function of each school's distinctive ethos (Rutter et al., 1979) or cumulation of beliefs, perspectives, structures and practices. Implicit in the idea of ethos or school culture is a structure not only of bureaucratic but of cultural leadership by teachers and administrators. The required practices and relations are, however, a substantial departure from established norms: a pattern of mutual independence on matters of teaching ("it's a matter of style"); a tradition of equal status relations among teachers with respect to curriculum and instruction (Cohen, 1981); and the absence of mechanisms for emerging leadership (Lortie, 1975; Cohen, 1981). This aspect of instructional leadership has added relevance in light of recent state and local initiatives to introduce status differences among teachers (e.g., through career ladders or master teacher plans) as a means of expanding professional opportunities and rewards.

Conclusions

In the first stage of a two-year study, we have gone searching for instructional leadership in secondary schools. The good news is that we have found it. Some schools stand out for the manner in which administrators and influential teachers have organized the work life of the school to devote time, thought, energy and budget to the steady improvement of curriculum and instruction. These are schools in which a pattern of principles and practices is clear, and in which academic and other gains appear to have followed from administrators' and teachers' work with one another. The bad news is that such principles and practices are rare, even in some schools with an established reputation for instructional leadership. One possibility is that the research methods and concepts were inadequate to the task, that more subtlety was required. At the same time, it seems reasonable to propose that practices so subtle as to escape detection by researchers who are actively seeking them are also likely to escape the notice of teachers who have other matters on their minds.

Specific practices of classroom observations and feedback have served in this paper as a vehicle for exploring patterns of instructional leadership. While such practices by no means exhaust the possibilities for administrators to exert influence on teachers' professional norms and classroom performance, they are among the practices that bring administrators and teachers most closely into touch with central challenges of classroom life. As a touchstone, they seem appropriate. They distinguish schools from one another, and reveal a set of leadership principles that can serve as the basis of further inquiry and demonstration programs of training and support.

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